

The Sojourn:

A River Adventure

Delaware River Sojourn 2000, an event to highlight the historical, environmental, and recreational significance of the longest un-dammed river east of the Mississippi, was held the third week of June.

The sojourn is an annual affair combining canoeing, camping, and educational programs. For the first time in its six-year history, participants paddled in all four states within the Delaware River Basin - Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Delaware.

On June 23 the sojourners took part in OpSail 2000, a parade of tall ships that docked in Philadelphia and Camden before journeying to



The Kathryn B, a 105-foot topsail schooner from Port Rockland Harbor, Maine, participates in OpSail 2000, the next to last leg for many of the participants in the sojourn. (Photo by Clarke Rupert)



An American flag juts from one of the red sails of the Jolly Rover, which serves as a "learn the ropes" classroom for Philadelphia area inner city kids willing to put up with discipline for river adventure. The youngsters, under adult supervision, do everything from piloting the 60-foot vessel to rigging sails and charting nautical courses. Based in Philadelphia, the Jolly Rover was among the tall ships taking part in OpSail 2000. (Photo by Chris Roberts)

New York City for July 4th celebrations.

The eight-day canoe trip covered more than 100 miles, beginning at Hancock, N.Y. The paddlers wound up their journey with a picnic in Delaware. Along the way, sojourn participants and well-wishers signed a wooden canoe paddle, a symbol of the collective spirit and camaraderie that is such a big part of the event.

The passing of the paddle downstream to the estuary also was a gesture to emphasize that the non-tidal reach of the river traveled by the canoeists is simply an extension of the tidal portion plied by the tall ships.

Passing the Paddle

A ceremonial paddle made its way through all 50 states between April 1 and October 7, 2000, to promote the importance of the nation's more than 3.2 million river miles and their watersheds.

State and national officials, along with boaters from across the country, passed the paddle from one state to another, using rivers that form state boundaries or flow from state to state. The 25,000-mile odyssey included 1,000 miles by water, 8,000 by air, and 16,000 by land.

The passage of the paddle from Pennsylvania to New York took place August 25 mid-way across Roebling's Delaware Aqueduct after a symbolic dip in the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River.

Carol Collier, the commission's executive director, joined officials from both states, the Upper Delaware Council, and the National Park Service to offer remarks in a public ceremony on the Pennsylvania side of the river in Lackawaxen.

After several other ceremonial stops in the Delaware River Basin, including the Hamilton/ Trenton Marsh, the paddle sailed across the Delaware Bay on the A.J. Meerwald, New Jersey's official tall ship, from its home port along the Maurice River in New Jersey to the state of Delaware. On October 1, the paddle passed from the Meerwald's crew to Delaware Governor and DRBC Chair Thomas Carper at "Coast Day" on the University of Delaware's Graduate Studies of Marine Science campus in Lewes.

The nationwide "Pass the Paddle" event was organized by the River Management Society, with help from a large and diverse coalition of non-profit organizations, government agencies, local communities, and businesses.

"It is one river system," noted Carol Collier, the DRBC's executive director. "What happens upstream impacts the river downstream. As such, it must be managed as one water body."

On each day of the journey "high admirals" were selected to recognize their dedication to protecting the river system. Among them were Jeanne M. Fox, regional administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region II; and Robert C. Shinn, Jr., commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

Sojourn sponsors included the DRBC, PPL Corporation, Public Service Electric & Gas (PSEG), PECO Energy, and Rohm and Haas.

Event organizers included the American Canoe Association, the DRBC, the Delaware River Greenway Partnership, the Heritage Conservancy, Kittatinny Canoes, Inc., the National Canoe Safety Patrol, the National Park Service, the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, Inc., the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, the Pocono Environmental Education Center, the Pocono Mountains Vacation Bureau, and the Upper Delaware Council, Inc.



Delaware Governor and DRBC Chair Thomas Carper accepts the Rivers 2000 paddle from Meghan Wren and the crew of the A. J. Meerwald, in Lewes, Del. Looking on from the dock are, left to right, Kevin Donnelly, director of the Division of Water Resources of the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC); Nicholas DiPasquale, DNREC's secretary, and Pearl Burbage, an environmental scientist with the agency. Both Mr. DiPasquale and Mr. Donnelly represent Gov. Carper on the commission.

(Photo by Chris Roberts)